

What are you Worth?

A well known speaker started off his seminar by holding up a £20 note, he asked, "Who would like this £20 note?" Hands started going up. He said, "I am going to give this £20 note to one of you but first, let me do this.

He proceeded to crumple the £20 note up. Then he asked, "Who still wants it?" Still the hands went up in the air.

"Well, he replied, "What if I do this?" He dropped it on the ground and started to grind it into the floor with his shoe. He picked it up, now crumpled and dirty. "Now, who still wants it?". Still the hands went into the air.

"My friends, you have all learned a very valuable lesson. No matter what I did to the money, you still wanted it because it did not decrease in value. I was still worth £20.

Many times in our lives, we are dropped, crumpled and ground into the dirt by the decisions made and the circumstances that come our way. We feel as though we are worthless. But no matter what has happened or what will happen, you will never lose your value; dirty or clean, crumpled or finely creased, you are still a priceless individual to those around you and those that love you.

The worth of our lives comes not in what
we do or who we know, but by
WHO WE ARE.
Don't ever forget it".

(Submitted by Lea Harding-Garzia)



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The Invitation

It doesn't interest me what you do for a living. I want to know what you ache for and if you dare to dream of meeting your heart's longing.

It doesn't interest me how old you are. I want to know if you will risk looking like a fool for love, for your dream, for the adventure of being alive.

It doesn't interest me what planets are squaring your moon. I want to know if you have touched the centre of your own sorrow, if you have been opened by life's betrayals or have become shrivelled and closed from the fear of further pain.

I want to know if you can sit with pain, mine or your own, without moving to hide it, or fade it, or fix it.

I want to know if you can be with joy, mine or your own; if you can dance with wildness and let the ecstasy fill you to the tips of your fingers and toes without cautioning us to be careful, be realistic, remember the limitations of being human.

It doesn't interest me if the story you are telling me is true. I want to know if you can disappoint another to be true to yourself. If you can bear the accusation of betrayal and not betray your own soul. If you can be faithless and therefore trustworthy.

I want to know if you can see Beauty even when it is not pretty every day. And if you can source your own life from its presence.

I want to know if you can live with failure, yours and mine, and still stand at the edge of the lake and shout to the silver of the full moon, 'Yes'.

It doesn't interest me to know where you live or how much money you have. I want to know if you can get up after the night of grief and despair, weary and bruised to the bone and do what needs to be done to feed the children.

It doesn't interest me who you know or how you came to be here. I want to know if you will stand in the centre of the fire with me and not shrink back.

It doesn't interest me where or what or with whom you have studied. I want to know what sustains you from the inside when all else falls away.

I want to know if you can be alone with yourself and if you truly like the company you keep in the empty moments.

Oriah Mountain Dreamer
(Submitted by Lisa Russell)

Radha and Krishna....A Love Story & The Rasa Lila

By Deb Auden

There are many stories about Krishna and his playfulness as he was growing up and of his life as a grown man, a king and a warrior, not to mention his time as Arjuna's guide in battle but this story is a love story. This is a story of passion and is really about his beautiful childhood sweetheart Radha.

Krishna was born of royal blood but his evil uncle had been told that the son of his nephew would defeat him and become king. He wasn't exactly a nice guy so he imprisoned his nephew and his wife and every child born to them was slaughtered but Krishna was different and he was smuggled out of the palace with a little help from divine intervention. Krishna was hidden away in a village of cow herders and had an ordinary life as a cow boy, well ordinaryish, he slaughtered a few demons along the way.

Krishna was the village sweetheart. Think of all those gooey teen movies and Rom coms. He was both the geeky, good guy and the swoony, sporty guy who made all the girls go weak at the knees. He was Brad Pitt or Robert Downey Jr or maybe Hank Moody in Californication, a bit naughty, very hot and achingly good looking to everyone. His name means 'all attractive' and he is the dark loving, attractive force at the heart.

So here is this young man surrounded by his playmates, caring for the cows and, as is often the case, he has a childhood sweetheart, Radha, who is a gopi, a cow girl. As he gets older he attracts a lot of attention from all the gopis in the village and they all swoon after him. They all beg him to dance with them and so Krishna says 'when the time is right I'll go to the woods and play my flute and you can come and we will dance under the moon light. You must come, no matter what you are doing. If you are cooking your hubby's tea, you come, if you are feeding your baby, you come. Whatever you are doing you come and we will dance.' What Krishna is asking them to do is to show true love, love that holds no boundaries, that is always there, passionate, a love that you will do anything for.

One moon filled night the village gopis hear the sound of Krishna's flute filling the night air. True to their word and filled with a desperate longing to dance under the stars with Krishna they leave their husbands, their babies, their chores and, for a moment, their lives and dash to the forest where they circle Krishna as he plays his flute. They sway and swoon and spin to his tune and Krishna, becoming the high school show off, thinks 'they should all have me as an individual dance partner.' So he multiplies himself and dances with

each and everyone of them. What a party! What an ecstatic dance! until the gopis start to look outside themselves. They start to lose their attention on charismatic Krishna and let their minds wander. 'how can she be enjoying this as much as me?' one thinks. 'He's looking at her with a bit more intently than me.' 'Ooh! She wore that top that makes her boobs look bigger just to get more attention.' 'Ouch, did he tread on my toe'. Of course Krishna realises that the gopis have lost their focus on self and begins to withdraw from each of them leaving them dancing alone, all but one. There is one gopi whose eyes never leave her lovers, who is so enthralled, so passionately in love with him that she is oblivious to everything around her and Krishna sees this.

Radha's love for Krishna kindles his love for her and he dances her off into the forest leaving the disgruntled gopis to let their imagination run wild.

Krishna's and Radha's love affair is steamy, passionate, long kisses and fiery arguments and passionate make ups. It is the Rasa Lila, the taste of passionate play. She will weep into her pillow as he flirts with another gopi and he will beg forgiveness as she gives him the cold shoulder.

As with many a passionate love story their love is not meant to be. Krishna needs to take on his role as King and leaves the sleepy, cow village but he never forgets Radha and she never loves another. You can imagine the scene in the film...Radha, sobbing in her bedroom, holding the tshirt Krishna gave her as it soaks up her tears and Krishna being driven off in a chariot as he longingly looks back, hoping to catch a last glance of his beloved. He says that for him the whole world is Radha and she spends the rest of her life meditating on Krishna so that everything she sees and is Krishna. The trees, the earth, the cows are all Krishna.

Years on and Krishna sends his proud apprentice Uddhava back to the village to see how the gopis are and he asks him to especially check on Radha. 'He felt bad for leaving them' Krishna says.

When Uddhava arrives he is horrified by what he sees. All these mad women wandering around hugging trees like wild hippies saying 'I love you Krishna' to the earth and the trees and the cattle. He takes them aside especially Radha and says 'Krishna sends his love and blessings to you all and is sorry he had to leave you but must stop this wildness. Quieten your minds and do some pranayama and see Krishna in your heart. Radha and the gopis laugh, 'why would we close our eyes to see Krishna when we see him everywhere, in everything. Krishna never left us, he is here in the twinkle in my eye, in the

moonlight shining on the water, in each and every drop of that water and in all the plants growing here.' Uddhava realises that the Krishna has tricked him and that the gopis have taught him the lesson of unity. They had realised their own inner state of union. Their madness is enlightened ecstasy.

We seek answers outside ourselves, we want validation for our experience. Yoga invites us to look within and find the playfulness, the abundance and see that love and abundance in everything. We are all divine creatures so every time we show love to another being, especially passionate love, we are showing love for the divine. We don't need to sit for hours in meditation to find self we can look at the world, we can look at our lover and see the truth that we are all one.

God

*A man whispered, 'God speak to me',
And a meadowlark sang
But the man did not hear.*

*So the man yelled, 'God speak to me',
And the thunder rolled across the sky.
But the man did not listen.*

*The man looked around and said 'God let me see you'.
And a star shone brightly.
But the man did not notice.*

*And the man shouted, 'God, show me a miracle'.
And a life was born.
But the man did not know.*

*So the man cried out in despair,
'Touch me God, and let me know that you are there'.
And God reached out and touched the man...
But the man brushed the butterfly away
And walked on.*

Bethal Baptist Church
Shotton. 2001

(Submitted by Lea Harding-Garzia)